



Legislative Testimony
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**Written Testimony Expressing Concerns on Senate Bill 972, An Act
Concerning Crisis Intervention Training for Police Officers and
Collaboration Between Police and Social Workers**

Senator Gaston, Representative Boyd, Ranking Members Cicarella and Howard, and distinguished members of the Public Safety Committee:

My name is Jess Zaccagnino, and I am the policy counsel for the American Civil Liberties Union of Connecticut (ACLU-CT). I am writing to express concern about Senate Bill 972, An Act Concerning Crisis Intervention Training for Police Officers and Collaboration Between Police and Social Workers.

Contact between community members and police can have tragic consequences for people experiencing mental health crises.¹ People who are in mental health crises need treatment. As such, public health and social work actors should be the ones to take the lead when addressing mental health crises, not as an auxiliary afterthought to police. Rather than continue to entrench the role of police in mental health, this Committee should seek to divest police from this function entirely.

We have significant concerns with Senate Bill 972 because of its failure to reduce the role of policing in our communities, particularly with regard to some of our most vulnerable residents when they are in need of medical care for a mental health crisis. As such, we encourage this Committee to re-evaluate its centering of police in mental health care entirely and shift its focus to mental health professionals, like social workers.

¹ See, e.g., *If You Are Black and in a Mental Health Crisis, 911 Can Be a Death Sentence*, INTERCEPT (Sept. 29, 2019), available at <https://theintercept.com/2019/09/29/police-shootings-mental-health/>.